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RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2251  
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SUBJECT: JOINT DEMARCHE ON PSI DELIVERED

REF: STATE 17716

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On February 15, the CDA joined with the Australian, New Zealand and Japanese ambassadors to deliver points on PSI to Vice Foreign Minister Le Van Bang, as instructed in reftel. In response, VFM Bang reiterated the GVN's policy of case-by-case cooperation to interdict suspected shipments of WMD and indicated that certain GVN agencies, including the Ministries of Defense and Public Security, among others, remain obstacles to Vietnam's outright endorsement of the Statement of Interdiction Principles. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) As envisioned in reftel, Australian Ambassador Bill Tweddell led a joint demarche involving colleagues from New Zealand, Canada and the United States urging Vietnam to join the Proliferation Security Initiative. The UK associated itself with the demarche, but was not present. Following the reading of reftel points, New Zealand Ambassador James Kember, Japanese Ambassador Norio Hattori and the CDA made brief additional comments. The group urged Vietnam to take one of a number of possible steps to embrace the PSI Statement of Interdiction Principles and to participate in PSI activities, including upcoming meetings in Auckland.

¶3. (SBU) In response, VFM Bang said that, as a policy, the GVN opposes the proliferation of WMD and will work with other countries to achieve this goal. Concerning PSI specifically, the GVN supports PSI goals in concrete ways, such as by monitoring suspect ships and having agreed to convert the Dalat nuclear research reactor to LEU fuel. But, in order for the GVN to officially endorse PSI, the GVN must first resolve internal concerns that endorsement would encroach on national sovereignty and strain limited GVN resources. VFM Bang indicated that, within the interagency process, the Ministries of Defense, Public Security and Finance, in particular, have concerns related to "sovereignty" and possible financial liability. The Ministry of Transportation also has concerns. VFM Bang asked that these ministries be included in our efforts to encourage the GVN to endorse PSI.

¶4. (SBU) VFM Bang confirmed that Vietnam will send a delegation to attend the next meeting of the PSI Operational Experts Group (OEG) in Auckland March 26-28, as well as the accompanying PSI Asia-Pacific Outreach Forum. He also mentioned that Senior Lieutenant General Nguyen Huy Hieu (number three overall in the Ministry of Defense) will be in Australia and New Zealand from March 14-22 for consultations. The Australian and New Zealand ambassadors promised to include PSI in the agenda for meetings with this MOD official.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: While VFM Bang's suggestion that concerns remain in the GVN interagency is probably valid, there are also doubters within the MFA as well. Like-minded embassies will nonetheless be consulting in the coming days on how best to broaden our outreach efforts to address VFM Bang's points. End Comment.

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